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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAO](#) [IS](#)

SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (05/04): CONCERNS MOUNT OVER
"ESCALATING ISRAELI VIOLATIONS"

Main Stories:

Al-Quds and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida lead with news of Israeli Minister of Interior Yeshay endorsing a decision on May 3 to, "confiscate 12,000 acres of Palestinian land" near the Jerusalem area Maale Adumim settlement. Papers note that the move is an attempt to absorb the Kidar settlement into Maale Adumim and build 6,000 additional settlement housing units. Continuing weekend coverage, reports add that Palestinian land in the East Jerusalem neighborhoods of Bayt Hanina and Silwan has also recently been "confiscated" to "force" Palestinians out of the city. Al-Hayat Al-Jadida quotes Palestinian Authority Official for Jerusalem Affairs Abdul Qadir commenting that the decision is "racist and reveals the true face of [Israeli Premier] Netanyahu's policy towards Palestinians." Qadir added that the policy serves the interests of Israeli settlers and he urged the international community to intervene and stop confiscations.

Al-Ayyam leads with and Al-Hayat Al-Jadida and Al-Quds front page reports on Palestinian Authority President Abbas' visit to Jordan on May 3. Abbas met with King Abdullah and discussed the need for coordinated efforts on the part of Arab countries to meet the challenges of the new Israeli Government. According to a joint communique, the two leaders stressed their commitment to the two-state solution, a halt to settlements and house demolitions in the hopes of restarting negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. According to coverage, King Abdullah condemned Israeli measures against Palestinian residents of Jerusalem and against Jerusalem religious sites. The two leaders also stressed that the international community must accept its responsibility to end the "siege" of Gaza and ensure the provision of medical and humanitarian assistance to Gazans and advance reconstruction efforts.

All front pages note Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's willingness to withdraw from Ghajar village on the Israeli-Lebanese border in response to U.S. pressure to produce a good-will gesture toward the Lebanese government.

Al-Quds runs front page coverage of Hamas leaders denying that Israel has threatened the group with force via Egyptian intermediaries. Hamas spokesperson Barhum noted on May 3 that Hamas is committed to a truce with Israel, but also ready to face any Israeli attack. Hamas leader Al-Masri asserted that armed resistance is the legitimate right of Palestinians in their efforts to end the Israeli occupation, according to the report.

All front pages report that Khalid Misha'al has been reelected Hamas politbureau chief. The new "Hamas cabinet" will include Mahmud Zahhar and four other members, reporting notes.

All dailies report on the Arab League's next meeting on May 7 in Cairo where responses to "continuous, escalating Israeli measures and violations against Jerusalem and religious sites" will be discussed. Director of the Arab League Secretary General's Office Yusif noted that Arab leaders will bring their concerns before the U.N. Security Council.

Al-Ayyam's front page cites Israeli daily Yedioth Ahronoth in reporting that the U.S. intends to promote indirect talks between Syria and Israel as part of broader efforts to improve U.S.-Syrian relations. According to coverage, the indirect talks would run parallel to Palestinian-Israeli talks and support U.S. efforts to deal with the Iranian nuclear threat. In related front page

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coverage, Al-Ayyam cites the wires in reporting that U.S. Embassy Damascus denied reports that U.S. officials would visit Syria soon.

All dailies report on a May 3rd reception in Ramallah hosted by the U.S. Consulate General, Jerusalem to honor Palestinian journalists on World Press Freedom Day. The reception was attended by a large number of Palestinian journalists representing many local and international media outlets, according to coverage. In her remarks, Public Affairs Officer Schweitzer-Bluhm, "saluted journalists for their professionalism and dedication and acknowledged their efforts to do their job despite all difficulties," reporting concludes.

Weekend Stories:

Sunday, May 3:

"Clinton: We are working to convince Israel to reopen Gaza crossings and allow goods into the Strip," front page headlines in Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida announced. Both papers quoted the Secretary extensively from her April 30 testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee and noted that she, "acknowledged that the American administration is facing difficulties in transferring the \$900 million that the U.S. pledged in support of Palestinians during the donors conference in Sharm Al Sheikh, because of a lack of guarantees that the funds will reach their intended recipients in the Gaza Strip." Reporting also noted that Clinton stressed that the existence of a Palestinian government whose entire membership accepted Middle East Quartet conditions would make matters easier. Al Quds' front page ran the same news, but also highlighted reaction by Human Rights Watch.

In related reporting, all front pages highlighted Israeli raids on May 2 that destroyed tunnels along the Egypt-Gaza border and killed two Palestinians. The reporting follows May 2 coverage of additional Israeli raids on Gaza tunnels.

Saturday, May 2:

Al Hayat Al Jadida front paged news, "Susan Rice: We hope to see a unified position at the May 11 meeting of the U.N. Security Council on support for the two-state solution." Ambassador Rice added in an interview with London-based Al Hayat newspaper that Washington has not yet designated a representative for the meeting, according to

coverage.

Al Quds led with news of Israeli plans to build an "Eastern Ring Road" around the city of Jerusalem in the hopes of thereby preventing a future Palestinian capital in the city. Reporting notes the issuance of demolition orders against 10 houses and the confiscation of 20 acres by Israeli authorities for that purpose. In other news, Al Quds' front page noted that "hopes for national reconciliation weaken following President Abbas' announcement to form an expanded government soon." Reporting noted that Fatah and Hamas have postponed the fifth round of talks, without setting a new date.

Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida led with reports about U.N. calls on Israel to halt home demolitions, "in occupied Jerusalem." The U.N. statement also highlighted that 60,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem live in unlicensed buildings. A recent report issued by UN-OCHA (Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) also highlighted that throughout the Palestinian Territories 3,000 Palestinian homes are under threat of Israeli demolition, possibly

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uprooting whole villages. The report also stated that, "while Palestinians face many obstacles in obtaining permits for building on 13% of East Jerusalem land, illegal construction in settlements... is flourishing."

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al-Quds daily independent runs an editorial under the title, "Will Israel find itself in conflict with the world?" (05/04): "The whole world, including the U.S. administration, which is known to be Israel's closest friend, opposes Israeli violations including settlements, land confiscation, and the siege. Nonetheless, Israel insists on proceeding with these policies, particularly Netanyahu and Lieberman who don't even try to hide their intentions... Israel will have to change its policies or face certain conflict with the U.S."

2) Omar Hilmi Al-Ghul opines in Al-Hayat Al-Jadida official daily under the title, "Is there truly press freedom?" (05/04): "Since 1993, May 3rd has been World Press Freedom Day honoring journalists ... Journalists in the Palestinian Territories are exposed to two kinds of violations, the first from Israel including imprisonment, killings and the second from the deposed Hamas government in Gaza, including the closure of several media outlets and muzzling of journalists... We call on all active human rights groups to defend the U.N. convention of freedom of expression, and to protect journalists, but will they listen?"

WALLES